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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

A program to stimulate interest in reading and to develop basic skills was established. The curriculum was developed and the goals, needs of the children, materials and procedures were determined. The place of the program in the elementary and junior high school schedules was established and standardized reading tests were administered at the beginning and end of the program. A wide variety of materials were introduced, including programmed materials and new skill texts, so that the children would be stimulated and their interest held.

A pre-service training period was required for the reading consultants. During these sessions the programmed materials and texts were presented and ways of introducing the program to parents and teachers were discussed. There were practice sessions with the machines, and a demonstration of the techniques of tape teaching in reading. A lecture was given by a librarian on ways to interest children in literature. A series of discussions focused on the role of the consultant with the teachers, and the organization of the program. Also a school which had a pilot program was visited, and demonstrations were given in various control schools.

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Developmental Reading Program

Boston Public Schools

and

Action for Boston Community Development

Report - September, 1964

The Developmental Reading Program which was introduced in three elementary districts and in three junior high schools was adopted by the School Department and A.B.C.D. for the specific purpose of providing an instructional program which would stimulate and maintain interest in reading and which would foster desirable growths in the basic reading skills and abilities. It was hypothesized that improved reading ability would motivate the child to greater academic achievement, encourage him to set higher aspirational levels for himself, and reduce the number of school dropouts.

The first step in the planning was the development of the curriculum. The curriculum was developed by the coordinator in cooperation with the Deputy Superintendent, Miss Marguerite G. Sullivan. Several conferences were held to determine the goals of the reading program, the needs of the children, the materials which would best suit these needs, and the procedures which would be most successful in a Developmental Reading Program.

A time schedule was set up for the elementary and junior high school levels. This schedule provided that the elementary classes should have one forty-minute period of reading in the morning and one thirty-minute period in the afternoon. This was an increase of 160 minutes in Grade V and 190 minutes in Grade VI over the regular time allotment for reading. Junior high classes were to have one period per day - an increase of five periods since reading was not a part of the regular junior high program.

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It was also planned that the reading consultant should take fifteen to twenty of the best pupils in Grades 5 and 6 for a fifty-minute literature period.

Curriculum discussion also included provision for establishing ways of evaluating the progress of the program. It was determined that standardized reading tests would be given in addition to the tests which are a definite part of the educational materials chosen for the program and to teacher-made tests.

Standardized reading tests were administered when the program began and when it ended. The results of these tests were to be used to group the children homogeneously in reading classes. Children would be regrouped as their reading grades improved. It was decided that each child should be able to make a systematic comparative appraisal of his own growth in reading with the hope that he might be motivated to greater achievement in other areas.

The materials selected for use in the program were chosen for their proven appeal to children whose interest span in activities connected with academic work is short, whose feelings of failure and frustration are strong, and in whom motivation is lacking. It is believed that a wide variety of materials to work with in the classroom stimulates interaction and activity and maintains the interest which would otherwise wane.

Since the culturally different children have experienced failure with the basal reading systems, programmed materials have been used to provide the reading material to motivate the child. In addition to the programmed materials, a variety of new skill texts have been introduced to develop the reading skills necessary for success in other subject areas.

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The second step in the development of the reading program was the Pre-service Training Period which was required for the reading consultants. This was a two-month period which began January 2, 1964, and ended March 2, 1964. These sessions which lasted all day were held in the Frank V. Thompson School, part of a district which was not in the target areas.

The first session was opened by Miss Marguerite G. Sullivan who congratulated the teachers for their desire to give service in the culturally different areas, emphasized the satisfaction and happiness which they would experience in their new positions, promised them all of her assistance in any problems which might arise, and wished the consultants great success.

The rest of that day was devoted to orientation to the background of, the research involved in, and the materials used in the Educational Developmental Laboratory materials. The teachers were shown a filmstrip which introduced the filmstrips to them and which they might use to introduce the new programmed materials to parents and teachers. This session included many suggestions for presenting the program to parents. The second session provided for instruction in the use of the other E.D.L. materials which would be used in the program; namely, the study skills and comprehension skills.

The sessions continued with the orientation of teachers to the Keys to Independence in Reading series. Orientation included the background of the series, how it was developed, and the success it has had. The series was built on the felt needs of the child and emphasizes phonetic skills, contextual skills, and sight skills. Methods of correlating this series with other reading systems were an important part of the training system.

The Science Research Association materials were thoroughly discussed and explained. The consultants evidenced more familiarity with this system than with the others. Emphasis was placed on the value of the teacher's manual; the need to use it, and the necessity for preparing lessons.

Practice with the machines helped to break the monotony of the lecture-type sessions and built up the confidence which was necessary if the consultant was to be a resource agent in a school building. The teachers soon became experts in the use of the Educational Developmental Laboratory materials.

Two experts were introduced to instruct the staff in the uses of the Overhead Projector as a means of stimulating and maintaining interest in the reading program. One of the resource people demonstrated ways of preparing lessons to build vocabulary, to develop reading for a mathematics program, and to interest children in other subject areas. The consultants enjoyed three field trips to Thermafax and to Technifax where they acquired many techniques in the preparation of transparencies which proved to be most valuable as aids in motivating the child to better reading.

One of the highlights of the training period was the demonstration of the techniques involved in tape teaching in reading. As a result of this demonstration, some of the consultants have developed their own materials for tape teaching in reading.

The director of Elementary Education, Miss Joanna Daly, gave a three hour lecture on successful methods and techniques which have been employed in the teaching of reading. She outlined many exercises which would be useful in developing the skills which are basic to the success of the reading program.

Mrs. Beryl Robinson, a well-known Boston Public librarian, came to the Thompson to discuss methods and techniques of interesting children in literature. She shared many ideas with the consultants during her two hour visit. She also examined and approved the list of books which was in preparation for the enrichment classes.

One day was spent at the Robert Gould Shaw School, the school which had the pilot junior high school reading program. The consultants were very much impressed with the program.

Since the reading teachers were becoming expert in the use of methods, materials, and machines, a new type of discussion was begun. Consultants would be working with teachers. What was their role? What qualities should they have? What difficulties could they foresee in this work? This type of discussion occupied many profitable hours.

The second series of discussions was concerned with the organization of the program. Samples of a schedule were dispersed. These were discussed and then each consultant had to take his own reading pupils, make a schedule, and group the children. Since this was done while all were working together, the consultants were able to see many ways of working out a program.

Part of the training time had to be devoted to administering reading tests to the 7th grade because research had not returned them.

The final two weeks of the training period were spent giving demonstrations in the control school and other sections of the city. This experience gave each consultant the opportunity to try out "his bag of tricks" and to see the reaction of the children before entering his own school. It was a worthwhile experience for all.

Catherine D. Mann

September 14, 1960